GUIDED JOURNAL

Simple & Free

JEN HATMAKER

***New York Times* bestselling author of**

FOR THE LOVE

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DISCOVER THE PEACE FOUND IN A RADICALLY SIMPLER LIFE USING THIS GUIDED JOURNAL FEATURING PROMPTS BASED ON THE JOYFUL, LIBERATING LESSONS SHARED BY *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR JEN HATMAKER IN *SIMPLE & FREE: 7 EXPERIMENTS AGAINST EXCESS.*

In *Simple & Free,* first published as *7,* Jen Hatmaker described her reckoning with excess through a social experiment, which turned into a spiritual movement. Now, in *Simple & Free: Guided Journal,* Hatmaker invites readers to examine their own seven areas of excess—from stress to spending to social media—and identify personal practices toward creating a life of "enough."

It's one thing to imagine a better story; it's another thing to live one. This guided journal helps us simplify the excess in our lives in practice, not just in wishful thinking. *Simple & Free: Guided Journal* is a tool to help us stay attentive, inspect our tendencies thoughtfully, and combat the modern-day diseases of greed, materialism, and overindulgence. It invites us to deeply explore seven areas of excess: clothes, shopping, waste, food, possessions, media, and stress—and create pathways toward a gentler, simpler life.

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JEN HATMAKER

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Dear Reader,

I am delighted you are here. Welcome to the *Simple & Free* experiment (formerly known as the *7* experiment).

Simple & Free is not a template. It is not a list of rules. It is not a program. It is simply an imperfect social experiment to help us find God in an overcrowded, overindulged, overscheduled life. If any word, any sentence, any section you read helps you cut through the chaos and simplify down to something meaningful, I will count it nothing but a privilege that I was able to walk alongside you in some small way. This has absolutely nothing to do with rules or guilt and everything to do with freedom. Much, much love to you, dear reader.

Love,

Jen

This weirdo little life you are constructing? Where you follow Jesus to strange places, take risks, and do bizarre things? It's all worth it. Every day of it. It only gets more exciting and meaningful. When God asks you to do something, do it. He is such a trustworthy leader. Don't be afraid. You've put your chips all in on the right number.

INTRO

Welcome to a little social experiment that changed our lives for good. I can say that now, because although this specific season is in my rearview mirror, as I looked back through every word I jotted down during my first foray into this experiment, I was surprised how many ideas were so new to me then, because they are the air we breathe today.

Let that be good news to you: No matter if anything you encounter in these next seven months seems too hard or crazy or overwhelming, maybe it will just be Step One into a new idea. Maybe in seven weeks, seven months, or seven years, you'll discover yourself embedded within an entirely new way of life; you won't even remember not thinking that way.

Remember, we're jumping into the *Simple & Free* experiment together. Some of us are brand-new, some are trying again, some of us are still living out the elements we learned from our experiment years ago. But we're all a part of this journey. We're all committed to being lifelong learners who are less attached to certainty and Being Right, and more interested in paying attention and developing.

Let's begin.

CONTENTS

MONTH ONE
FOOD 1

MONTH TWO
CLOTHES 33

MONTH THREE
POSSESSIONS 65

MONTH FOUR
MEDIA 97

MONTH FIVE
WASTE 129

MONTH SIX
SPENDING 161

MONTH SEVEN
STRESS 193

CONCLUSION 227

MONTH ONE

FOOD

Picking seven foods is like trying to pick my favorite kid . . . so clearly this category required some thought. After consulting those who know me best, and after much, much prayer, I landed on these guys: chicken, eggs, whole-wheat bread, sweet potatoes, spinach, avocados, and apples.

Month one, day one—time to choose the seven simple foods we'll eat for the next thirty days. As you determine your choices, keep in mind the purpose of *Simple & Free*: to embark on a journey of less. To purge the excessive mess of choice and pare down to what is necessary. It's an exercise in simplicity—not a pursuit of the latest that diet culture has to offer.

DAY 1

What seven foods will you choose for this month?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 2

What's your motivation for embarking on this journey? What is the quiet hope you have for this experiment? Write it all down here—the more specific, the more helpful these words will be for you in those moments when this journey starts to lose its sexiness. Our reasons for starting this experiment can only help in the road ahead. What are yours?

DAY 3

Who are the people with you on this journey? They could be friends or family members with whom you've talked about this journey, or they could be coworkers or church groups who are coming along for the ride. Who are those folks in your corner, and what makes them safe people for you?

DAY 4

What are some words that have been nourishing for you lately? They could be lyrics from a song; they could be Scripture; they could be poems. They could be quotes by Michael Pollan or Ruth Reichl or Chrissy Teigen—or any writer for that matter. Write some of those lines here.

DAY 5

Dear Coffee: I miss you already. We're just on a break. Don't worry. They say if you love something, set it free; and if it comes back to you, then it was truly addicted to you in the first place. Hold on to that. Mark it down: Jen / Java reunion in twenty-five days. Be strong.

DAY 6

What are some ways you can pursue creativity? They could be big or small. They could be trying out a new recipe that uses your foods. They could be making up a recipe yourself! Brainstorm, imagine—or even just jot down ways you've already been mixing things up.

DAY 7

All right. Seven days in. Be honest: What do you hate the most about this?

DAY 8

What are some of your favorite meals? Why? Do they remind you of home? What memories arise when you think of these meals?

DAY 9

This is a fast, a major reduction of the endless possibilities that accompany my every meal. It is supposed to be uncomfortable and inconvenient. This shake-up of my routine commands my attention. I can no longer default to normal, usual, mindless, thoughtless. It's like having an eyelash under my contact all day. What will the Spirit do with this new space? We'll see.

DAY 10

What in my life, if taken away, would alter my value or identity?

DAY 11

What causes an unhealthy change of attitude, personality, or focus when "it" becomes threatened?

DAY 12

Brace yourself for a tsunami of convictions here. What is the thing outside of God that you put everything else on hold for?

DAY 13

After the shine wears off, the real spiritual work begins.

DAY 14

What do you want more of in your life? What do you want to shed?

DAY 15

Here's something I prayed in the thick of my first *Simple & Free* experiment: "Jesus, please help me find gratitude. This whole thing feels stupid." Write out your own prayer for today.

DAY 16

Describe the way you were raised to think about food.

DAY 17

"Teaching by example, radical obedience, justice, mercy, activism, and sacrifice wholly inspire me. . . . I'm at that place where 'well done' trumps 'well said.' The careful study of the Word has a goal which is not the careful study of the Word. The objective is to discover Jesus and allow Him to change our trajectory.

DAY 18

List five ways you plan to find rest, fun, and nourishment this week.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY 19

What are some conceptions of Jesus you've learned to shed over your life? What are some new ways you're pursuing the way of Jesus lately?

DAY 20

In your pursuit of shedding and simplifying your life in the past twenty days, what are some things you feel like you've gained? They could be new insights, observations, or affirmations. Anything.

DAY 21

In so many ways I am the opposite of Jesus' lifestyle. This keeps me up at night. I can't have authentic communion with Him while mired in the trappings He begged me to avoid. . . . But we can forge a small sense of solidarity with Jesus: Blessed are the meek. Humble yourself like a child. Sell all your things and give to the poor. Don't gain the world only to forfeit your soul.

DAY 22

What do you feel excited for?

DAY 23

In the words of Barbara Brown Taylor (and me), what is saving your life right now?

DAY 24

In the absence of endless choices, where are you finding the fulfillment you might otherwise find in an abundance of food options?

DAY [illegible]

There are days when we seek
things for ourselves
and measure failure by what we
do not gain.
On the Sabbath we seek not to
acquire but to share.
There are days when we exploit
nature
as if it were a horn of plenty that
can never be exhausted.
On the Sabbath we stand in
wonder before the mystery of
creation.
There are days when we act as if
we cared nothing for the rights
of others.
On the Sabbath we are reminded
that justice is our duty and a
better world our goal.
Therefore we welcome Shabbat.
Day of rest, day of wonder, day of
peace.

—Shabbat reading

DAY 26

What has surprised you during this first month?

DAY 27

What are you grateful for today?

DAY 28

On the way to contemplation we do the same thing that Jesus Christ did in the wilderness. Jesus teaches us not to say, "Lord, Lord," but to do the will of his Father. What must primarily concern us is that we do what Jesus has bidden us do. Jesus went into the wilderness, ate nothing for forty days, and made himself empty. . . . Of course, emptiness in and of itself isn't enough. The point of emptiness is to get ourselves out of the way so that Christ can fill us up. As soon as we're empty, there's a place for Christ, because only then are we in any sense ready to recognize and accept Christ as the totally other, who is not me.

—RICHARD ROHR

DAY 29

What non-*Simple & Free* meal are you most looking forward to?

DAY 30

What practice, idea, belief, or rhythm from the past thirty days do you want to keep with you beyond this experiment?

MONTH TWO

CLOTHES

On any given day I wear jeans and a T-shirt. My style is utterly unsophisticated; I look like a college girl who rolled out of bed five minutes before class—but who has prematurely aged. Anyhow, I'm a simple or possibly lazy dresser who doesn't spend much time thinking about my wardrobe.

Clothes are just not a huge deal to me.

So, why clothes then? Why reduce radically in a neutral category I say I don't care about? Because although that sounds true in my head, my closet tells me a different story. I walked through all five of our closets, and I realized we spent real cash on every single item. I did some fuzzy averaging, and if we spent around ten dollars on each item, our closets represent an expenditure of, well, a lot of money. (I'm a writer, not an accountant.) It is such a high total I had to sit down. Especially considering we don't wear half of the items.

Underwear doesn't count. It just doesn't, okay? Between bra, panties, and socks, I'd use up half my allotment before I got my pants on. I considered omitting understuff from my wardrobe, but unleashing my free-swinging lady self onto this innocent world is probably a felony. No one deserves that kind of visual assault. So undergarments get a free pass, and if that makes me a *Simple & Free* slacker, well, at least I'm a slacker wearing a bra.

Here are my clothes for the month:

- One pair of jeans, dark wash, kind of plain
- One long-sleeved solid black T-shirt, fitted
- One short-sleeved black "Haiti relief" T-shirt with white print
- One short-sleeved gray "Mellow Johnny's Bike Shop" T-shirt with yellow print
- One pair of gray knit drawstring capri pants
- One long dark brown silk dress shirt
- Shoes: cowboy boots and tennis shoes

DAY 1

What are your seven pieces of clothing? What made you choose these pieces?

DAY 2

What does your relationship to clothes/fashion look like? Are you like me—more or less blasé about it all, yet somehow guilty of a bustling closet—or are you a deliberate lover of cultivating style?

DAY 3

What do you think is, or will be, the hardest part about paring down options for clothes?

DAY 4

Maybe once we slow the cash hemorrhaging, some buried issues could surface, interrupting our default settings and raising questions we've never asked.

DAY 5

What upcoming events, people, or environments worry you when it comes to the thought of having only seven pieces of clothing? For me, it was a women's speaking event in Atlanta, where girls come out of the womb dressed to the nines.

DAY 6

In my first *Simple & Free* experiment with clothes, my friends and I organized a clothing swap to sustainably freshen up our wardrobes while resisting the consumer machine. What are some ways you can similarly pursue creativity and sustainability?

DAY 7

What's something you can celebrate about the past few weeks? It can have nothing to do with *Simple & Free*; it can have everything to do with *Simple & Free*. It can be a small win a friend had recently that you just want to pause and give attention to. What's that thing for you?

DAY 8

This next generation takes a lot of crap for being entitled or lazy, but let me tell you: they are a thousand times more sophisticated than we were when it comes to conservation, consumerism, and wastefulness. They care. They are paying attention to the planet and supply chains and their own carbon footprint. I have a ton of faith in them; I believe they'll do what our generation has been unwilling to do in order to rescue this groaning earth.

DAY 9

What are five things you love about this part of *Simple & Free*?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY 10

What are five things you . . . don't love about this part of *Simple & Free*?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

DAY 11

Is there anything you've noticed you think less about since the start of this experiment? Is there anything you've noticed you think more about?

DAY 12

Oh, how we love our religious yokes, not for what they communicate about God, but what they say about us. This is the kind of people we are. We say "no" when everyone else says "yes." We don't do <u>that</u>. We don't watch <u>that</u>. We don't vote <u>that</u> way. We don't go <u>there</u>. We don't include <u>them</u>.

But God's idea of a fast is less about what we're against and more about what we are <u>for</u>.

DAY 13

How has this experiment made you look at clothes differently?

DAY 14

Who has been inspiring you and challenging you for good during this season? Could be a friend, a family member, or someone you follow on social. What do they do or say that moves you?

DAY 15

Think about your seven clothing pieces. What does each remind you of?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 16

When thirty-five years of choices overwhelm me, Jesus makes it simple again: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you read the story, you'll see that Jesus takes a broad, global, interracial view of who our neighbor is.

DAY 17

When you buy clothes, what are the factors that motivate your thinking and spending habits?

DAY 18

What are some ways you can implement more ethical, thoughtful, and sustainable consumer practices? (Once this month is over, of course.)

DAY 19

Flip back to the first days of this journal. What do you know now that you didn't know then?

DAY 20

The average human gets around twenty-five thousand days on this earth, and most of us in the United States of America will get a few more. That's it. This life is a breath, and we live in that thin space where faith and obedience have relevance. We have this one life to offer; we get one shot at living to expand the kingdom, fighting for justice.

DAY 21

What's the hardest part of this journey so far?

DAY 22

What have you become more aware of in this experiment?

DAY 23

Look back to the first couple of days. Have you forgotten any parts of your initial reasons for starting this journey? Do you still resonate with those reasons?

DAY 24

Jesus didn't garner esteem the conventional way, but make no mistake: He was noticed. He was loved by the outsider, hated by the religious elite, revered by His followers, and killed by His enemies. For a plain carpenter from Nazareth, Jesus sure found His way to the center ring—not through power or ruthlessness but through subversion and truth. His humility appeals to the unloveliness in us all. We are drawn in by His simplicity, then transformed by His magnificence.

DAY 25

What are some parts of Jesus' lifestyle that resonate with you? What parts do you want to emulate more?

DAY 26

What pieces of art—whether it's a visual you caught in a museum, or a piece of writing from a book or article that struck you recently, or a chorus from a song that's been on heavy rotation lately—have been sustaining you?

DAY 27

Jesus' kingdom continues in the same manner it was launched: through humility, subversion, love, sacrifice; through calling empty religion to reform and behaving like we believe the meek will indeed inherit the earth. We cannot carry the gospel to the poor and lowly while emulating the practices of the rich and powerful. We've been invited into a story that begins with humility and ends with glory, never the other way around. Let's align ourselves correctly, sharing in the humble ministry of Jesus, knowing one day we'll feast at His table in splendor.

DAY 28

Has there been an emotion, a result, or a revelation that has surprised you so far?

DAY 29

What do you want to keep from this part of the experiment? What are you excited to return to after this experiment?

DAY 30

What has this month taught you about yourself?

MONTH THREE

POSSESSIONS

About three times a year, I rant around the house, screaming at our stuff: "What is all this? Why do we have so much junk? How am I supposed to keep up with all this? Where did this all come from?" And then I remember:

I bought it all.

I am starving for reform. Here is the deal:

One month.

Give seven things away that we own.

Every day.

Let's do this.

> I had come to see that the great tragedy in the church is not that rich Christians do not care about the poor but that rich Christians do not know the poor. . . . I long for the Calcutta slums to meet the Chicago suburbs, for lepers to meet landowners and for each to see God's image in the other. . . . I truly believe that when the poor meet the rich, riches will have no meaning. And when the rich meet the poor, we will see poverty come to an end.
>
> —SHANE CLAIBORNE

DAY 1

This month, use each day to document the seven things you choose to give away. On Day 1, what are the seven possessions you've given away, or are planning to give away? What do these seven things mean to you?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 2

What are your seven picks for today? What does each signify for you?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 3

What are your seven possessions you'll give away today? How did each of these wind up in your home?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 4

Think about the possessions you've given away so far. What common denominator do they share?

DAY 5

When you consider the items you tend to identify to give away, what season(s) of your life do they represent for you?

DAY 6

What will you miss about today's items?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 7

What makes you excited to get rid of today's possessions?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 8

Having thrown myself into this arena for a few months, I thought I would be thrilled to rip those boots off my rich feet and happily give them over to the homeless (who would promptly sell them since they are entirely impractical and worth a pretty penny—I've learned a few things). But I was discouraged to feel the twinge of selfishness rear its head first. Seriously? I'm going to make a deal over boots? Have I come only this far, God? I suck.

Jesus, unwilling to entertain my melodrama, cut to the chase: "Give them up. I have something to teach you."

DAY 9

What will you give away today?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 10

What conversations have you had with friends, family, and/or your community about this part of the experiment?

DAY 11

What have you learned about yourself through the past ten days that you didn't realize previously?

DAY 12

If we all raised others up instead of raising ourselves a little higher, there would be few needs left on earth. We each meet unique needs in our cities and our world. I marvel at what God accomplishes with the generosity of His sons and daughters. I'm proud they are brothers and sisters. What a family.

DAY 13

Are there certain categories of possessions that feel easier to let go of than others? E.g., pots and pans are easier to give away than are clothes. What does that look like for you?

DAY 14

What are you giving away today? What do you hope happens to these guys?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 15

Think about the reasons you started this experiment in the first place. Have they amplified along the way, or shrunk back? How have they evolved?

DAY 16

Simple & Free is becoming epically transformative. Tension led me here; now God is making a mess of things. I sense God preparing us for change. My sensitivity is peaking—noteworthy because I have the sensitivity of a thirteen-year-old boy. I feel raw and less and less attached to my stuff. Scripture is pouncing on my brain like a panther. It's like when I first got glasses and couldn't get over how clear everything was. And I walked weird because my perception was altered. I kept shouting, "Look at all the leaves! I can see every leaf on the tree!" like it was a miracle after having been impaired so long.

I have no idea what this means, but my hands are opening. I know my next phase of life is not going to look the same.

DAY 17

What do you miss about your life before this part of the experiment? What are you looking forward to once this part is over?

DAY 18

What are the seven things you're thinking about giving away today?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 19

Think back to the items you mentioned a few days back—the ones that you've been thinking about but feel are hard to lose. Where are they now?

DAY 20

We're just about to become adults, to honestly let the Gospel speak to us, to listen to what Jesus says, in no uncertain terms, about poverty and about leading a simple life in this world, a life that shows trust in God and not in our own power and weapons. God never promised us security in this world. God promised us only truth and freedom in our hearts. What does all this mean for us? It means that we're on the way.

—RICHARD ROHR

DAY 21

What are today's seven giveaways?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 22

Write out a prayer of thanks today.

DAY 23

Today, write a prayer that tells God what you need.

DAY 24

What if a bunch of Christians wrote a new story, becoming consumers the earth is groaning for? I suspect we'd find that elusive contentment, storing up treasures in heaven like Jesus told us to. I'm betting our stuff would lose its grip and we'd discover riches contained in a simpler life, a communal responsibility. Money is the most frequent theme in Scripture; perhaps the secret to happiness is right under our noses. Maybe we don't recognize satisfaction because it is disguised as radical generosity, a strange misnomer in a consumer culture.

DAY 25

How has the practice of giving away affected your relationship to your possessions in general?

DAY 26

What has been inspiring, motivating, or energizing for you during this experiment?

DAY 27

Today, I have a million and a half followers on social media. In every category of work I make more money now. And yet the increase in fame and income did not shield me from loss, pain, trauma, or suffering. Nor did it make me categorically happier. It really didn't. The goodness of life is still located where it always was: in family, friends, memories, Jesus.

DAY 28

What do you want to take from this experiment, and keep as a rhythm in your life beyond the duration of the *Simple & Free* journey?

DAY 29

How has this experiment shaped, influenced, or changed the way you think about the terms "treasures in heaven" and "treasures on earth"?

DAY 30

A child says "me." An adult says "us." Maturity deciphers need from want, wisdom from foolishness. Growing up means curbing appetites, shifting from "me" to "we," understanding private choices have social consequences and public outcomes. Let's be consumers who silence the screaming voice that yells, "I WANT!" and instead listen to the quiet "we need," the marginalized voice of the worldwide community we belong to.

MONTH FOUR

MEDIA

This month, we stop the madness.

We're going radio silent. We're shutting down seven screens and muting the chatter. For instance, no

- TV
- Gaming
- Facebook/Twitter
- iPhone apps
- Radio
- Texting*
- Internet*

Asterisk 1: our texting rule: If it is a time-saver and/or necessary, then text away. If it's to be sarcastic, silly, or inappropriate, then pass. We're deferring to our own discernment, so someone should check my texts weekly because heaven knows I need accountability.

Asterisk 2: The Internet is a necessary tool for our jobs and life. Event planners, the kids' teachers, our adoption agency, my Restore Group, agent and publisher, and my neighbors correspond through e-mail. Additionally, I do research for my books and messages online. I can't ditch Internet for a month.

DAY 1

What are your seven media items for this fast?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 2

What worries you most about this particular experiment?

DAY 3

What excited you about this experiment?

DAY 4

Take something away,
and your habits
become clear.

DAY 5

In the absence of media and all its noise, what has the silence been like for you? Is it peaceful? Unnerving? Welcome? Strange?

DAY 6

What are some activities and moments when you've found yourself to be more present, in the absence of media?

DAY 7

In the best world, where all dreams and hopes come true, what happens to/for you at the end of this experiment?

DAY 8

God is using <u>Simple & Free</u> to transform the ease of my communion with Him. It's intimacy like a comfortable sweatshirt, beyond dressed-up Sunday wear—past the formality, past the spiritual tasks. More like "Let's just live this life together." Something more relational and daily. Something in the gaps of spiritual activities, in between the stuff on a calendar. It's just simple communion, the natural kind between people who spend a lot of time together. I'm pondering this:

> He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Mic. 6:8).

God is teaching me <u>walk humbly</u>—daily, simply, quietly. If more of us took the "walk humbly with your God" part seriously, we might become agents of justice and mercy without even meaning to.

DAY 9

What do you miss about the media you've chosen for your fast?

DAY 10

What are the best and worst things about this experiment so far?

DAY 11

Have you digital-detoxed before? What was that like? If you haven't, what did you think about the idea?

DAY 12

What have you found yourself craving during this experiment?

DAY 13

I'm just beginning to embrace the liberation that only exists at the bottom, where I have nothing to defend, nothing to protect. Where it doesn't matter if I'm right or esteemed or positioned well. I wonder if that's the freedom Jesus meant when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). In order for Jesus' kingdom to come, my kingdom will have to go, and for the first time I think I'm okay with that.

DAY 14

Who are the people in your corner who have been sustaining you during this journey? Write some words of gratitude to them.

DAY 15

What has this season of quiet, of silence, of lessened noise taught you about yourself?

DAY 16

I think each of us needs to ask, "What does it mean for a human being to flourish?" These technologies are forcing us to be more deliberate about asking that question. We need to sit down with ourselves and say, "As I look at my daily life, as I look at the past year, as I look at the past five years, what are the aspects of my life that have been the most rewarding and enriching? When have I been happiest? What are the things that have made me flourish?" If we ask these questions in a thoughtful, explicit way, then we can say more definitely what these technologies are adding to the human experience and, more importantly, what they're subtracting from the human experience.

—MICHAEL BESS

DAY 17

What is something you've learned about modern life in the past two weeks?

DAY 18

How has this particular fast shaped your spiritual life?

DAY 19

Before this experiment, how did it feel whenever you consciously unplugged from media and devices? Has the continuity of this round made the experience feel different from those previous instances?

DAY 20

What element of media do you find yourself hungering for the most? Is it the company of some audible voices? Is it the storytelling? Is it background noise?

DAY 21

Who are some people who have been inspiring you during this journey? What are some things they've said that have energized you?

DAY 22

When you tell others about this part of the experiment, what language do you use to describe it?

DAY 23

What have your motivations looked like, specifically for this part of the experiment?

DAY 24

While I find a "good old days" approach overly sentimental and impractical, as technology is here to stay and an asset to global progress by any account, old-fashioned human contact cannot be replaced. Unplugged mental rest cannot be replaced. Experiencing the world through our senses cannot be replaced. We must be the grownups in the room; our technology cannot parent and rule us, or our kids.

DAY 25

What are some gifts that this experiment has given you? They could be time, silence, quiet—one could even be discomfort. What are some things that have arisen?

DAY 26

All right, be honest: What specific device or media outlet are you most looking forward to getting back?

DAY 27

It is possible to delete apps from our phones. We can declare entire days or time slots screen-free. We can charge phones overnight in another room in the house. We can limit our children's usage no matter what their peers say or do. This will all be increasingly countercultural, I'm afraid, but it is our responsibility to keep ourselves and families connected to each other, to other people, and to this gorgeous earth.

DAY 28

What's something you're excited about not continuing once this part of the experiment is finished? What's something you do want to continue?

DAY 29

Are there any other media forms you'd consider giving up?

DAY 30

How are you feeling today?

Let's review the months so far:

I ate Ethiopian food on the fifth day of *Simple & Free*.

I wore a nonsanctioned jacket during Day 1 of the clothes fast.

I pre-hoarded piles of clothes for giveaway month, just in case.

I came *this close* to watching TV during media fast.

I warned you about these tendencies. I never pretended I had a will of iron, people. That I'm still doing this is a miracle.

Let's keep going.

MONTH FIVE

WASTE

This month the Hatmakers are doing their part, setting aside apathy and respecting the earth God made and loves, trying to care for it in a way that makes sense for our kids and their kids and everyone's kids. Because let me tell you something: We are wasters. We are consumers. We are definitely a part of the problem. I no more think about how my consumption affects the earth or anyone else living on it than I think about becoming a personal trainer; there is just no category for it in my mind. (Please revisit my introduction to *Simple & Free*, where I declared repentance the first motivation. Thank you.)

So, Month Five—seven habits for a greener life, a fast from assuming I am not a part of an integrated earth but somehow above it all, expecting that sacrifices necessary to accommodate humanity should be made by species other than me. Sample habits to take up this month:

- Gardening
- Composting
- Conserving energy and water
- Recycling (everything, all of it)
- Driving only one car (for love of the land)
- Shopping thrift and secondhand
- Buying only local

DAY 1

What are the seven habits you're leaning into for a greener life?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 2

Have you tried any of these habits/practices before? How did that go?

DAY 3

What's been the hardest practice so far? What has that been like?

DAY 4

The ecological teaching of the Bible is simply inescapable: God made the world because He wanted it made. He thinks the world is good, and He loves it. It is His world; He has never relinquished title to it. And He has never revoked the conditions, bearing on His gift to us of the use of it, that oblige us to take excellent care of it. If God loves the world, then how might any person of faith be excused for not loving it or justified in destroying it?

—WENDELL BERRY

DAY 5

What's one thing you love about yourself?

DAY 6

What are you learning to own about yourself?

DAY 7

What has this practice taught you so far?

DAY 8

What aspect of yourself are you trying to learn more about?

DAY 9

I keep thinking about our obsession with health. Our kids have been immunized, checked, prodded, measured, tested, and examined since the day they were born.

Why?

Because God gave us spectacular bodies, and we value them.

But as certainly as God created man in His image, He first created the earth. With the same care He designed sixty thousand miles of blood vessels in the human body, He also crafted hydrangeas and freshwater rapids and hummingbirds. He balanced healthy ecosystems with precision and established climates and beauty. He integrated colors and smells and sounds that would astound humanity. The details He included while designing the earth are so extraordinary, it is no wonder He spent five of the six days of creation on it.

DAY 10

Think of one person who's with you on this journey—whether by joining you in these practices or by cheering you on from afar. What's your favorite thing about this person?

DAY 11

What is your relationship to the earth like? How has that changed since your childhood?

DAY 12

When does it feel hard to love others?

DAY 13

What's one small way you can create joy for yourself this week?

DAY 14

Why don't we care for the earth anywhere near to the degree we do our bodies? Why don't we fuss and examine and steward creation with the same tenacity? Why aren't we refusing complicity in the ravaging of our planet? Why aren't we determined to stop pillaging the earth's resources like savages? Why do we mock environmentalists and undermine their passion for conservation? Do we think ourselves so superior to the rest of creation that we are willing to deplete the earth to supply our luxuries? If so, we may very well be the last generation who gets that prerogative.

DAY 15

What's one small way you can create joy for a friend this week?

DAY 16

Between this month's practices, and the past months of taking stock of our consumption habits at large, what big things are you noticing about yourself—be they habits, desires, tendencies, or even the things you've realized are easier than you previously thought?

DAY 17

What's one thing you've picked up in the *Simple & Free* experiment so far that you want to keep practicing, thinking, believing, or doing long after this experiment concludes?

DAY 18

My hypocrisies are too numerous to count, but this month birthed something unmistakable: I'm done separating ecology from theology, pretending they don't originate from the same source.

DAY 19

Which habit, of the seven green practices this month, is the easiest so far? Which habit has been the hardest?

DAY 20

What's been fun for you this week?

DAY 21

What are you looking forward to?

DAY 22

What book, audiobook, podcast, or other piece of storytelling have you been enjoying recently?

DAY [illegible]

The earth is the Lord's, and everything
    in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.

—Ps. 24:1–2

DAY 24

What has been sustaining you in these past few weeks of fasting and reducing? (You can be honest and say you've been barely hanging on by a thread here.)

DAY 25

What's your favorite thing to buy locally? What do you love about it?

DAY 26

In the past month or so, what are some things you've learned about waste and consumption at large? It could be something you've learned through practice, through personal trial and error, or through the news.

DAY 27

What's one current reality of our world that is sadly true? What's one thing you wish to be a current reality of our world?

You must take action. You must do the impossible. Because giving up can never ever be an option.

—GRETA THUNBERG

DAY 28

What will you take from this practice onward?

DAY 29

What's been heavy on your mind/heart lately?

DAY 30

What do you want to see happen in the world in the next five years?

I am recommitting to doing the right thing. I am examining it all: our meat consumption, carbon footprint, waste, single-use products, travel, sourcing. I want to have an answer for my grandchildren when they ask what I did to reverse global warming. It is not too late. But this will be our generation's legacy . . . one way or another.

MONTH SIX

SPENDING

We're spending money in only seven places this month—a slight decrease in consuming (sarcasm): 89 percent fewer vendors in a month, for the love of Moses. These are the vendors getting our dough:

- Sunset Valley Farmers' Market
- H-E-B gas station (flex fuel!)
- Online bill pay
- Kids' school
- Limited travel fund
- Emergency medical
- Target

This means no restaurants, movie theaters, Chick-fil-A, no Coke and nachos at the UT/UCLA game (or parking), no Kindle/Barnes & Noble/amazon.com/Half Price Books to feed my habit, no lunch after church, no Hays High School football games unless my mom the Principal scores us free tickets, no hunting paraphernalia (Brandon), *Call of Duty 4* (Gavin), iTunes (Sydney), fishing worms (Caleb), and Mama Fu's spicy Mongolian beef over brown rice with a beef curry roll (moi).

DAY 1

What are the seven places you'll allow yourself to spend this month? Name one thing you love or can't live without from each place.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 2

What practices and progresses would you like to see in your spending and giving habits?

DAY 3

Is there something you've always wanted to do, that you feel more empowered to do given the practices this month?

DAY 4

And when I get a teeny bit discouraged that my little rage against the machine is silly, I remember that I'm making healthier choices for my family and rediscovering the farm-to-table system God created, and that counts. When I look at the resources of our earth and all the humans it needs to sustain, I have to adopt an "as for me and my house" perspective on responsibility.

DAY 5

What have you noticed about yourself, your lifestyle, or your community's habits that you hadn't noticed previously?

DAY 6

What has informed the spirituality of ecology in your life?

DAY 7

What are ways you've pursued simplicity and reduced spending and consumerism in the past?

DAY 8

The earth is groaning, and we're putting coffee bars in our $35 million sanctuaries. Just because we can have it doesn't mean we should. I marvel at how out of place simple, humble Jesus would be in today's American churches.

DAY 9

What feels hard about living the kind of simple, humble lifestyle Jesus demonstrated?

DAY 10

It takes true courage to rage against this machine. Could we be countercultural enough to say, "We're not buying that. We don't need that. We'll make do with what we have. We'll use the stuff we already own"? If this causes anxiety, I'm with you, trust me. Because who else does that? But we can—we can stop spending so much; use what we have, borrow what we need, repurpose possessions instead of replacing them; and—the kicker—live with less.

DAY 11

What has been giving you hope lately?

DAY 12

"You're hopeless, you Pharisees! Frauds! You keep meticulous account books, tithing on every nickel and dime you get, but manage to find loopholes for getting around basic matters of justice and God's love. Careful bookkeeping is commendable, but the basics are required."

—LUKE 11:42, THE MESSAGE

DAY 13

How have your original motivations for engaging in the *Simple & Free* experiment changed, evolved, reshaped, or remained in the past few months?

DAY 14

How have you surprised yourself in this journey?

DAY 15

Think of someone in your corner. Write a thank-you card to them here.

DAY 16

I'm starting to wonder if Jesus actually meant what He said. Was He serious about sanctification through extreme generosity? Is He really advocating redistribution? I don't know if He knows this, but this would mean completely retooling the way we live and spend.

DAY 17

What has surprised you about Jesus in your reflections on Him?

DAY 18

Do you view faith, spirituality, church, or Jesus differently than you did when you first started? In what ways?

DAY 19

What's been bringing you joy recently?

DAY 20

What if we're buying a bag of tricks? What if wealth and indulgence are creating a polished people rotting from the inside out, without even knowing it? Is there a reason Jesus called the rich blind, deaf, unseeing, unhearing, and foolish? Jesus never utters a positive word about the wealthy, only tons of parables with us as the punch line and this observation: It is terribly hard for us to receive His kingdom, harder than shoving a camel through the eye of a needle. That's really hard. If this is true, then more than fearing poverty or simplicity, we should fear prosperity.

DAY 21

What is your relationship to money like? How has it changed—or remained—in the past few years?

DAY 22

What person, truth, affirmation, or prayer is sustaining you lately?

DAY 23

What's the best thing that happened to you in the past week?

DAY 24

Your love, Lord, reaches to the
heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.

Your righteousness is like the highest
mountains,
your justice like the great deep.
You, Lord, preserve both people and
animals.

How priceless is your unfailing love,
O God!
People take refuge in the shadow of
your wings.

They feast on the abundance of your
house;
you give them drink from your river of
delights.

For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.

—Ps. 36:5–9

DAY 25

What are you most looking forward to once this fast is over?

DAY 26

Throughout the anniversary edition, I write notes to myself—myself from ten years ago. What would you say to yourself from ten years back?

DAY 27

At some point, the church stopped living the Bible and decided just to study it, culling the feast parts and whitewashing the fast parts. We are addicted to the buffet, skillfully discarding the costly discipleship required after consuming. The feast is supposed to sustain the fast, but we go back for seconds and thirds and fourths, stuffed to the brim and fat with inactivity. All this is for me.

Not so with members of the early church, who stunned their Roman neighbors and leaders with generosity, curbing their own appetites for the mission of Jesus. They constantly practiced self-denial to alleviate human misery.

DAY 28

What will you miss about this month? What won't you miss?

DAY 29

What's one thing you've learned about yourself from the past few months of these fasts?

DAY 30

What was your greatest joy and challenge this month?

MONTH SEVEN

STRESS

For the love of Barnum and Bailey, we have too much going on. We are short-fused, stressed out, overextended, and unrested. This pace is not sustainable. I don't want it to be. This season of life is passing me by, accelerated by a lack of boundaries. Most days I just try to keep the wheels on, not living in the moment at all; I'm just getting it done while thinking about what's left. My kids and husband get half answers, and eye contact is a crapshoot. Every day I could take a two-hour nap, so exhausted do I feel at 1:00 P.M. I have considered abandoning my career over the volume of e-mails.

Such is the ridiculous American life. Every one of my friends has a similar story. None of us are happy about it, yet we keep filling the calendars. Yes, I'm in; we'll sign up; I'll do it. We race from one activity to another, teaching our children to max out and stress out. Nice legacy.

After six months of *Simple & Free*, I am ready to tackle resting and prayer. On the seventh day God rested, and in the seventh month we will too. The kids are thrilled, instinctively understanding that fasting from a fast life has "marvelous" written all over it. Plus, it won't mess with their Game Boys or access to Double Dave's Pizzaworks for the Wednesday buffet.

For Month Seven, our guide will be *Seven Sacred Pauses*, written by Macrina Wiederkehr, member of the monastic community St. Scholastica, whose wisdom is so profound, I underlined nearly every sentence in the book. She quotes Pius Parsch, who describes the pauses as "breathing spells for the soul," oases to remember the sacredness of life, who we are, how to offer God the incredible gift of our lives, and learn to *be* in the midst of so much doing. We will pause and pray seven times a day:

The Night Watch (midnight)
The Awakening Hour (dawn)
The Blessing Hour (midmorning)
The Hour of Illumination (noon)
The Wisdom Hour (midafternoon)
The Twilight Hour (early evening)
The Great Silence (bedtime)

DAY 1

What pauses will you embed in your daily rhythm this month?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

DAY 2

What do you anticipate will be hard about these practices? What are you looking forward to?

DAY 3

What practices of silence, contemplation, rest, or pause have you exercised in the past?

DAY 4

Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.
—Ps. 42:11

(Thanks for being hope! God, I want to be hope too. And I pray these forgotten, lonely, and abandoned people will not give up hope.)

DAY 5

What readings have been sustaining you?

DAY 6

What do you savor about these silences? What's been uncomfortable about them?

DAY 7

What Sabbath fails have you encountered so far? No judgment—in the *Simple & Free* book, clearly I have no shortage of these guys.

DAY 8

Which Sabbath exercise has been your favorite so far?

DAY [illegible]

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

—HEB. 4:9–11

DAY 10

What do you do to replenish and reenergize yourself?

DAY 11

What are some activities you do to rest and wind down?

DAY 12

Who are safe people who help you recuperate?

DAY 13

Maybe Sabbath isn't just another spiritual task to wear us out. Perhaps God designed this as a gift, not an obligation. What if God understood our tendency to overwork and underrest, so He made it mandatory for believers to breathe . . . pause . . . pray . . . relax every week? Maybe Jesus meant it when He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). God ordained the Sabbath for us, not as just another requirement from us.

DAY 14

What has been weighing you down lately that you want to hand over to the Lord?

DAY 15

What meals, foods, drinks, or other goodies do you associate with Sabbath rest?

DAY 16

Who in your life do you notice observing Sabbath in a really beautiful way?

DAY 17

This month, we follow the ancients, the monastics, and the contemplatives into the practice of honoring the hours. Those humble enough to pause and touch the grace of the hour have hallowed these rhythms for centuries.

DAY 18

We're a little over halfway through this month where we fast from stress. What has this time revealed to you?

DAY 19

What do you feel generates the most stress in your life?

DAY 20

How has your relationship with silence remained, evolved, or changed so far?

DAY 21

Satisfy us in the morning with
your unfailing love;
so that we may sing for joy
and be glad all our days.
—Ps. 90:14

DAY 22

Reader, let's pause and consider what a feat it is that you've made it this far into the journey. Whether you stuck to this experiment hardcore, all day, every day for seven months straight, or you hopped on/hopped off, or somewhere in between the two, thank you for joining me. How are you feeling today?

DAY 23

What has this experiment of fasting from stress shown you about your desires? Do you crave business, rest, activity?

DAY 24

Which of your seven pauses do you find yourself most looking forward to?

DAY 25

O You whose face is a thousand colors . . . look upon us in this twilight hour, and color our faces with the radiance of your love. As the light of the sun fades away, light the lamps of our hearts that we may see one another more clearly.

—MACRINA WIEDERKEHR

DAY 26

As this seven-month experiment comes to a slow close, which month was your favorite, and why?

DAY 27

Which part of the *Simple & Free* experiment do you want to try again?

DAY 28

The Sabbath is holy.
Not lazy, not selfish,
not unproductive;
not helpful, not optional,
not just a good idea.
Holy.

DAY 29

What were the hardest challenges from this month?

DAY 30

What were the greatest joys from this month?

What happens in the spiritual realm when we pray? It's such a mystery. What words prompt the Spirit to move? What goodness do we join Him on when we pray for peace? How powerful are our prayer words? They are a catalyst for miracles, the impetus for healing. Does God wait for us to pray in His will, primed to move for righteousness? How many relationships is He waiting to mend? How much turmoil is He poised to soothe? How much peace is He ready to administer? Are we withholding the necessary words to trigger God's intervention?

Perhaps this is why He urges us to forgive, release, lie down, let go, trust, offer, submit, and obey; these are the keys that turn the locks that bind.

CONCLUSION

This experimental mutiny against excess showed me that God and people matter. That's basically it. Everything else disintegrates when you clutch it too tightly. We have around one minute on this planet before our time is up, and this is our shot to build a more equitable world. It is our responsibility to challenge structures and systems that keep people out and down, locked in suffering while the same few prosper. This is our work. We are able in Jesus. His kingdom will come. His will done. May it be on earth as it is in heaven.

JEN HATMAKER is the author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *For the Love* and *Fierce, Free, and Full of Fire.* She hosts the award-winning *For the Love* podcast, is the delighted curator of the Jen Hatmaker Book Club, and leads a tightly knit online community, reaching millions of people each week. Hatmaker is a co-founder of Legacy Collective, a giving community that grants millions of dollars around the world. She is a mom to five kids and lives happily just outside Austin, Texas, in a 1908 farmhouse with questionable plumbing.

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"I'VE DISCOVERED THAT REDUCED CONSUMPTION DOESN'T EQUAL REDUCED COMMUNITY OR REDUCED CONTENTMENT. THERE IS SOMETHING LIBERATING ABOUT UNPLUGGING THE MACHINE TO DISCOVER THE HEARTBEAT OF LIFE STILL THUMPING. IS THERE A LESS TRAVELED PATH THROUGH OUR ME-FIRST CULTURE THAT IS MORE ADVENTUROUS AND FULFILLING THAN THE ONE SO HEAVILY TROD? ONE THAT SACRIFICES NONE OF THE GOOD PARTS OF THE STORY BUT INSPIRES US TO REIMAGINE THE SECTIONS THAT ARE BLEEDING US ALL DRY? I THINK MAYBE THERE IS."

—Jen Hatmaker

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